

One

Provide a program of voluntary preschool education, universally available to children from low-income families

WE RECOMMEND that states provide a program of voluntary high-quality, preschool education, which is universally available to 3- and 4-year-old children from families at or below 200 percent of the poverty line.

The commission believes that preschool⁶ education should be available universally to ensure that all children develop the skills needed to be successful later in school. While children of more highly educated and higher-income families are more likely to take advantage of preschool programs, most children from low-income families are not afforded the same opportunities.⁷ Preschool programs offer children the opportunity to develop cognitive skills and prepare them for success in later grades.⁸ It will be important for local, state and federal agencies to work together to provide universal access to high-quality preschool programs for all children, especially those from low-income families.

Programs such as Head Start are targeted for this recommendation because they are designed to provide comprehensive school readiness to low-income students. Preschool education can impact positively the lives of students, parents, teachers and others. Some of the major issues in preschool education are insufficient enrollment and the variety of quality programs within a state and across the nation.

In this era of accountability, policymakers are interested in understanding what research reveals about the impact and importance of state-funded preschool programs. Data are being collected, but they are fragmented. The Early Childhood Data Collaborative is committed to creating a common integrated approach for data collection.⁹ Data collected from this collaborative can be used by policymakers to make informed decisions.

The following indicators provide insight into the accessibility of preschool education to children from low-income families:

- Percentage of 3- and 4-year-olds enrolled in preschool or kindergarten programs;
- Percentage of 3- and 4-year-olds enrolled in state-funded pre-K programs; and
- Percentage of 3- and 4-year-olds enrolled in Head Start programs.

6. The terms preschool and pre-K are used interchangeably.

7. Barnett, W. S., and Yarosz, D. J. (2007). *Who Goes to Preschool and Why Does It Matter*. Retrieved June 1, 2011, from <http://nieer.org/resources/policybriefs/15.pdf>

8. Campbell, F. A., Pungello, E. P., Miller-Johnson, S., Burchinal, M., and Ramey, C. T. The Development of Cognitive and Academic Abilities: Growth Curves from an Early Childhood Educational Experiment, *Developmental Psychology* 37(2) (2001): 231–242.

9. The Early Childhood Data Collaborative. Retrieved May 6, 2011, from <http://www.ecedata.org>

General Findings for This Recommendation

- As of 2008, 47.5 percent of 3- and 4-year-olds are in preschool or kindergarten programs.
- As of 2008, 34.4 percent of 3-year-olds are in preschool or kindergarten programs.
- As of 2008, 60.7 percent of 4-year-olds are in preschool or kindergarten programs.
- As of 2008, 53.3 percent of Asian 3- and 4-year-olds are in preschool or kindergarten programs.
- As of 2008, 45.0 percent of Native American or Alaska Native 3- and 4-year-olds are in preschool or kindergarten programs.
- As of 2008, 52.5 percent of African American 3- and 4-year-olds are in preschool or kindergarten programs.
- As of 2008, 38.5 percent of Hispanic 3- and 4-year-olds are in preschool or kindergarten programs.
- As of 2008, 49.8 percent of white 3- and 4-year-olds are in preschool or kindergarten programs.
- As of 2009, 14.6 percent of 3- and 4-year-olds are in state-funded pre-K programs.
- As of 2009, 3.7 percent of 3-year-olds are in state-funded pre-K programs.
- As of 2009, 25.4 percent of 4-year-olds are in state-funded pre-K programs.
- As of 2009, 8.6 percent of 3- and 4-year-olds are in Head Start programs.
- As of 2009, 7.1 percent of 3-year-olds are in Head Start programs.
- As of 2009, 10.0 percent of 4-year-olds are in Head Start programs.

47.5%

As of 2008, 47.5 percent of 3- and 4-year-olds are in preschool or kindergarten programs.

▲ 1.5ppts 2007–2008*

34.4%

As of 2008, 34.4 percent of 3-year-olds are in preschool or kindergarten programs.

▲ 1.5ppts 2007–2008*

60.7%

As of 2008, 60.7 percent of 4-year-olds are in preschool or kindergarten programs.

▲ 1.7ppts 2007–2008*

Percentage of 3- and 4-Year-Olds Enrolled in Preschool Programs or Kindergarten Programs

What is this measure, and why is this measure important? The data for this indicator represent the percentage of 3- and 4-year-olds in preschool or kindergarten programs. It is important to monitor the percentage of particular subgroups in preschool education to ensure that children from low-income or minority populations have access to preschool programs. The measure is presented by age, race/ethnicity, state rank, age by state rank and race/ethnicity by state rank.

What are the policy issues associated with this measure? Preschool or kindergarten programs help individuals develop a variety of skills that will contribute to a productive workforce in the future.¹⁰ In an effort to assess the relationship between the quality of preschool education and later academic and life outcomes, the Early Learning Challenge Fund¹¹ provides funding to support states in building a longitudinal data system to track the educational progress of students. In addition, the Data Quality Campaign¹² is another organization committed to providing guidance and training in the use of the longitudinal data systems. The goals of the longitudinal data systems are to link preschool to workforce systems, but many states have only just adopted the basic elements needed to adequately track individuals through these systems. Policymakers need to appreciate that even once these systems are in place, it may take many years before there are enough data to evaluate the efficacy of preschool on college and career outcomes. The knowledge of these outcomes requires a sustained commitment and likely additional funding to create shorter term research agendas with which to address these questions.

Where are we now? As of 2008, 47.5 percent of 3- and 4-year-olds are in preschool or kindergarten programs. There are a higher percentage of 4-year-olds (60.7 percent) than 3-year-olds (34.4 percent) in preschool or kindergarten programs (Figure 1.1a). When disaggregated by race/ethnicity, there are five subgroups with nearly half of the subgroup in preschool education: (1) Asian (53.3 percent); (2) African American (52.5 percent); (3) two or more races (49.9 percent); (4) white (49.8 percent); and (5) American Indian or Alaska Native (45.0 percent; Figure 1.1b). In addition, 38.5 percent of Hispanics and 30.5 percent of Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islanders are in preschool programs during this time.

10. Campbell, F. A., Pungello, E. P., Miller-Johnson, S., Burchinal, M., and Ramey, C. T. (2001). The Development of Cognitive and Academic Abilities: Growth Curves from an Early Childhood Educational Experiment, *Developmental Psychology*, 37(2), 231–242.

11. The Early Learning Challenge Fund. Retrieved May 6, 2011, from <http://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/ed/earlylearning/elcf-factsheet.html>

12. The Data Quality Campaign. Retrieved June 1, 2011, from <http://www.dataqualitycampaign.org/>

* Data are not comparable to data in 2010 Progress Report and change is based on calculation from new source.

53.3%

As of 2008, 53.3 percent of Asian 3- and 4-year-olds are in preschool or kindergarten programs.

▲ **3.0ppts** 2007–2008*

45.0%

As of 2008, 45.0 percent of Native American or Alaska Native 3- and 4-year-olds are in preschool or kindergarten programs.

◀▶ 2007–2008

52.5%

As of 2008, 52.5 percent of African American 3- and 4-year-olds are in preschool or kindergarten programs.

▲ **2.0ppts** 2007–2008*

The District of Columbia has the highest percentage (68.5 percent) of 3- and 4-year-olds in preschool or kindergarten programs, and Nevada has the lowest percentage (27.6 percent; Figure 1.1c). New Jersey has the highest percentage (53.5 percent) of 3-year-olds in preschool programs, and Nevada has the lowest percentage (19.7 percent; Figure 1.1d). The District of Columbia has the highest percentage (84.7 percent) of 4-year-olds in preschool or kindergarten programs, and Nevada has the lowest percentage (35.6 percent, Figure 1.1e).

Many states and the District of Columbia do not have data available by all racial/ethnic groups for the percentage of each ethnicity in preschool or kindergarten programs (Figure 1.1f). There are 34 states with data available for the percentage of Asian 3- and 4-year-olds in preschool or kindergarten programs. Michigan has the highest percentage (66.5 percent) of Asian 3- and 4-year-olds in preschool or kindergarten programs, and Alabama has the lowest percentage (29.7 percent).

There are 16 states with data available for American Indian or Alaska Native 3- and 4-year-olds in preschool or kindergarten programs (Figure 1.1g). Wisconsin has the highest percentage (65.1 percent) of American Indian or Alaska Native 3- and 4-year-olds in preschool programs, and North Dakota has the lowest percentage (28.8 percent).

There are 38 states and the District of Columbia with data available for African American 3- and 4-year-olds in preschool or kindergarten programs (Figure 1.1h). New Jersey has the highest percentage (69.4 percent) of African American 3- and 4-year-olds in preschool programs, and Nebraska has the lowest percentage (22.7 percent).

There are 44 states and the District of Columbia with data available for Hispanic 3- and 4-year-olds in preschool or kindergarten programs (Figure 1.1i). The District of Columbia has the highest percentage (76.5 percent) of Hispanic 3- and 4-year-olds in preschool or kindergarten programs, and Nevada has the lowest percentage (19.2 percent).

Data are available for all 50 states and the District of Columbia for white 3- and 4-year-olds in preschool or kindergarten programs (Figure 1.1j). The District of Columbia has the highest percentage (79.8 percent) of white 3- and 4-year-olds in preschool programs, and North Dakota has the lowest percentage (34.5 percent).

There are 42 states with data available for 3- and 4-year-olds who are two or more races in preschool or kindergarten programs (Figure 1.1k). New Jersey has the highest percentage (66.8 percent) of 3- and 4-year-olds of two or more races in preschool or kindergarten programs, and Nevada has the lowest percentage (23.3 percent).

* Data are not comparable to data in 2010 Progress Report and change is based on calculation from new source.

38.5%

As of 2008, 38.5 percent of Hispanic 3- and 4-year-olds are in preschool or kindergarten programs.

▲ 1.6ppts 2007–2008*

49.8%

As of 2008, 49.8 percent of white 3- and 4-year-olds are in preschool or kindergarten programs.

▲ 1.6ppts 2007–2008*

When interpreting this measure, what should be kept in mind?

The information in this indicator describes the proportion of 3- and 4-year-olds in a preschool or kindergarten program. These data are not detailed enough to parse out enrollment in preschool programs versus that of kindergarten programs. In addition, there are a variety of preschool or kindergarten programs, each with a different focus. The foci of the program may include but are not limited to the following topics or approaches to teaching: child/play-centered, teacher-directed/academic, cooperative, Montessori, Reggio Emilia and Waldorf.¹³ Families are given the opportunity to choose which program may work best for their child. Some families may be limited by their selection because of cost, distance, transportation or other competing values.

Finally, the data presented in this measure are from the American Community Survey and are based on three-year estimates, which mean they represent the characteristics of the population from 2006–2008. These estimates are available over one year, three years or five years. The three-year estimates are more precise than the one-year estimates and more current than the five-year estimates. The three-year estimates also have a larger sample size than the one-year estimates. Use of the three-year estimates reduces the size of sampling errors, which lead to more stable estimates than the one-year estimates.

13. Wana, J. (2010). *How to choose the best preschool for your child: The ultimate guide to finding, getting into, and preparing for nursery school* (Naperville, IL: Sourcebooks, Inc.).

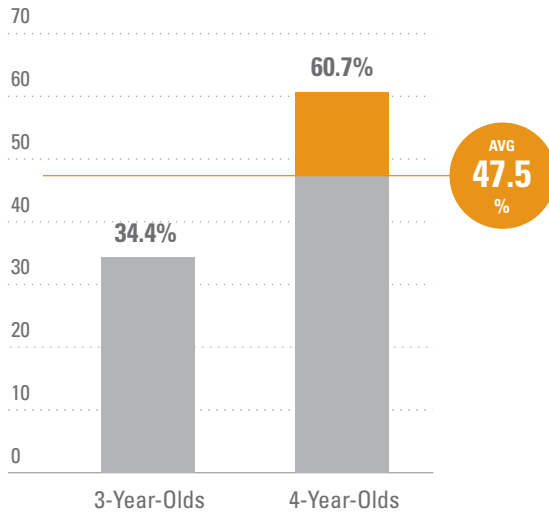
1.1a

National Percentage of 3- and 4-Year-Olds Enrolled in Preschool or Kindergarten Programs by Age, 2006–2008

Updated data source



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006–2008 American Community Survey Three-Year Estimates



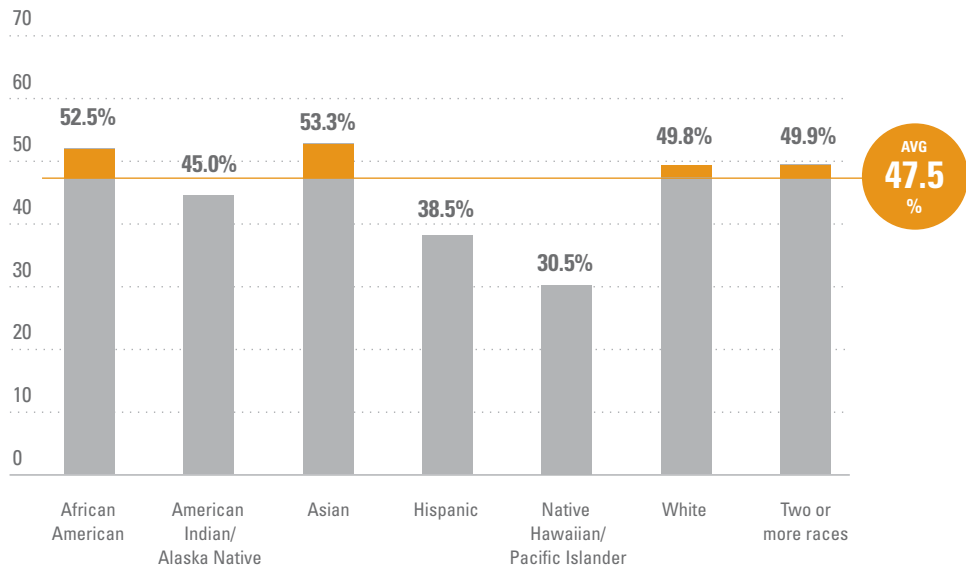
1.1b

Percentage of 3- and 4-Year-Olds Enrolled in Preschool or Kindergarten Programs by Race/Ethnicity, 2006–2008

New figure



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006–2008 American Community Survey Three-Year Estimates

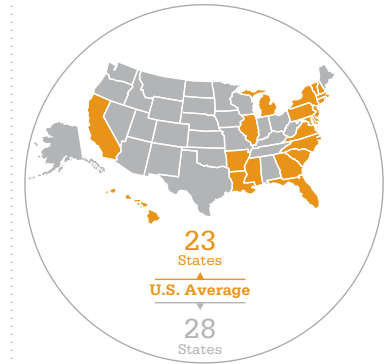
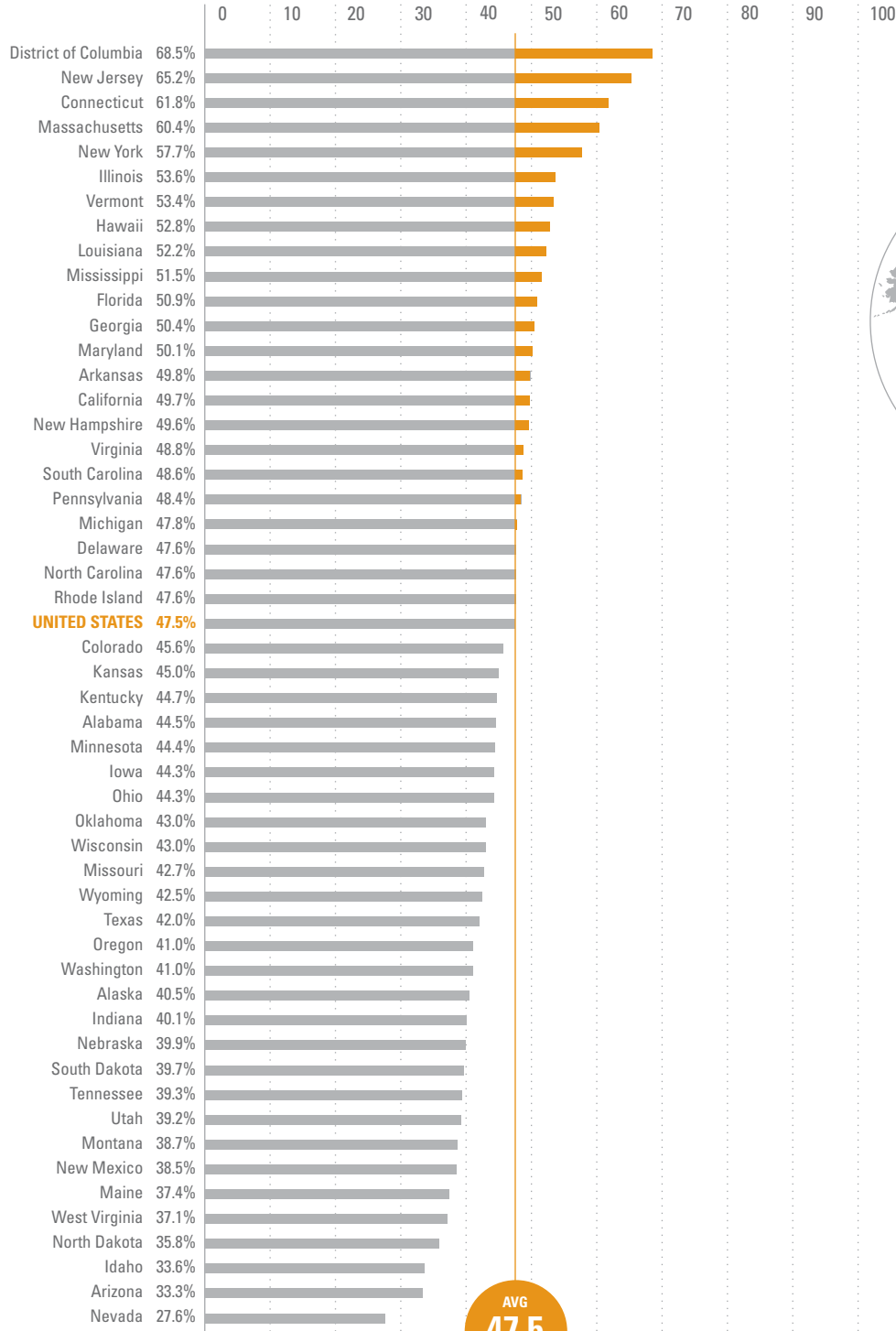


1.1c

Percentage of 3- and 4-Year-Olds Enrolled in Preschool or Kindergarten Programs by State Rank, 2006–2008

New figure +

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006–2008 American Community Survey Three-Year Estimates



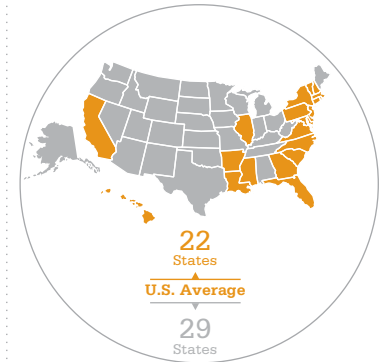
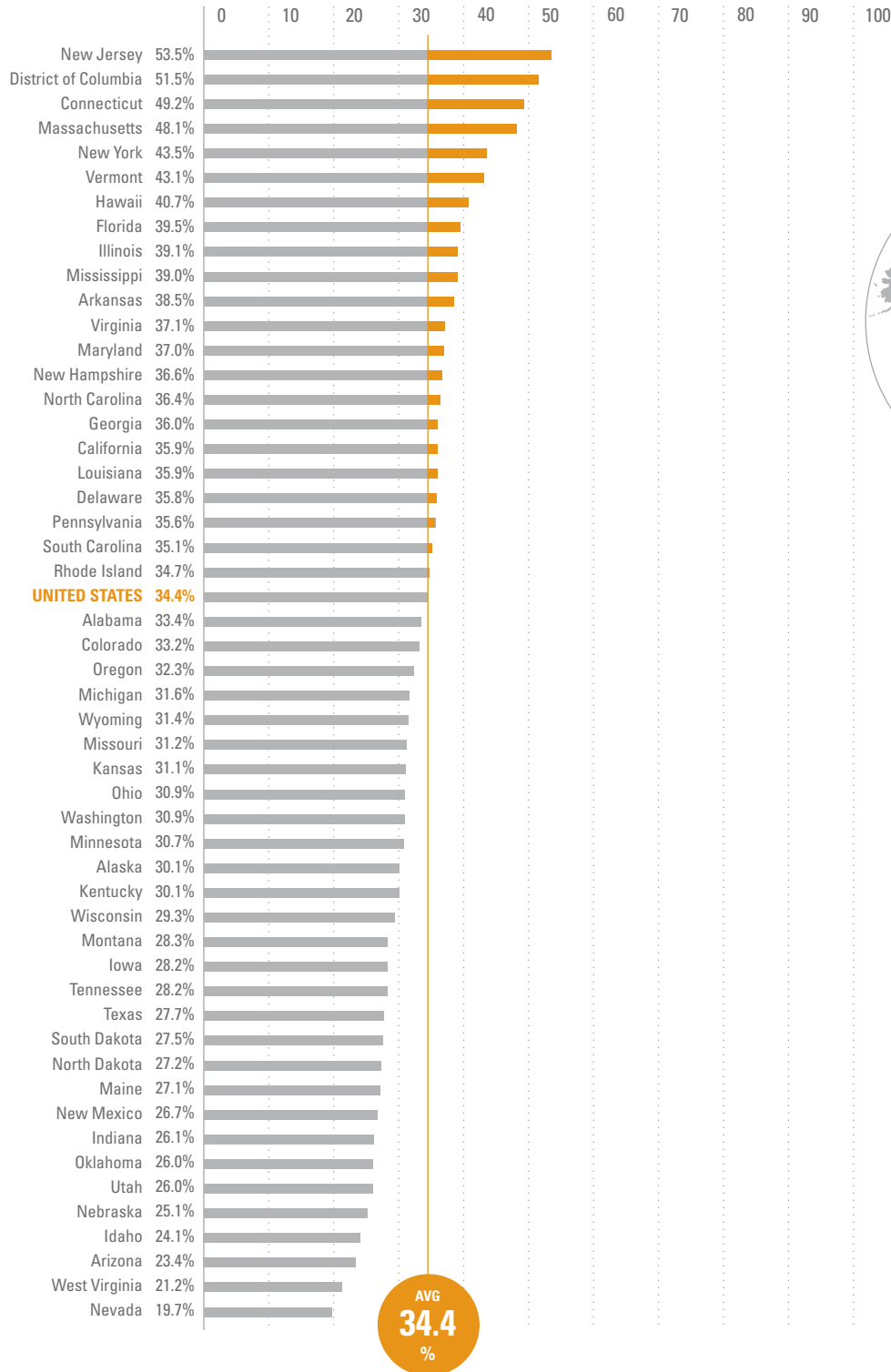
AVG
47.5
%

1.1d

Percentage of 3-Year-Olds Enrolled in Preschool or Kindergarten Programs by State Rank, 2006–2008

New figure +

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006–2008 American Community Survey Three-Year Estimates

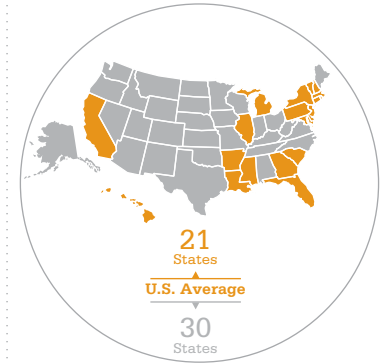
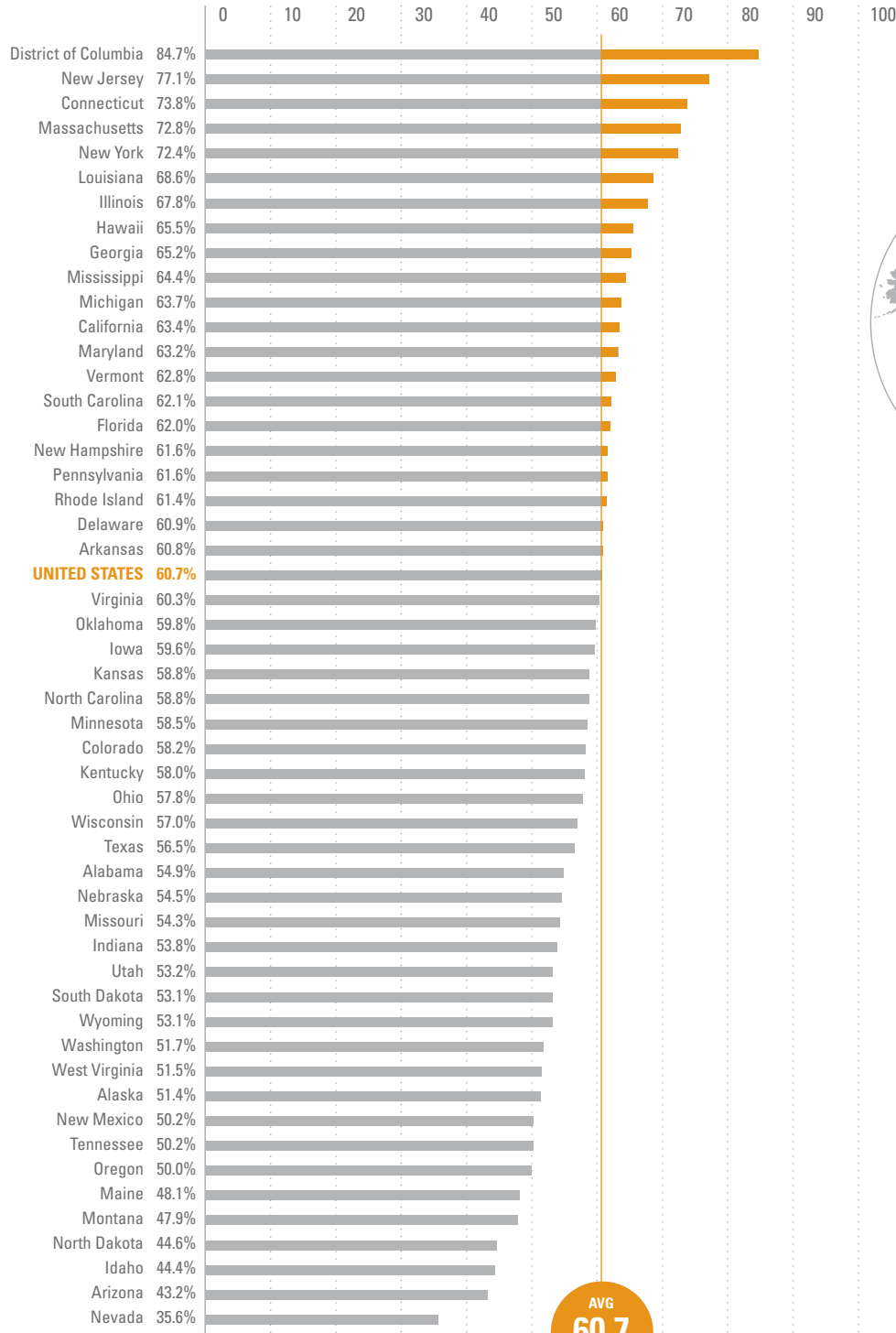


1.1e

Percentage of 4-Year-Olds Enrolled in Preschool or Kindergarten Programs by State Rank, 2006–2008

New figure +

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006–2008 American Community Survey Three-Year Estimates



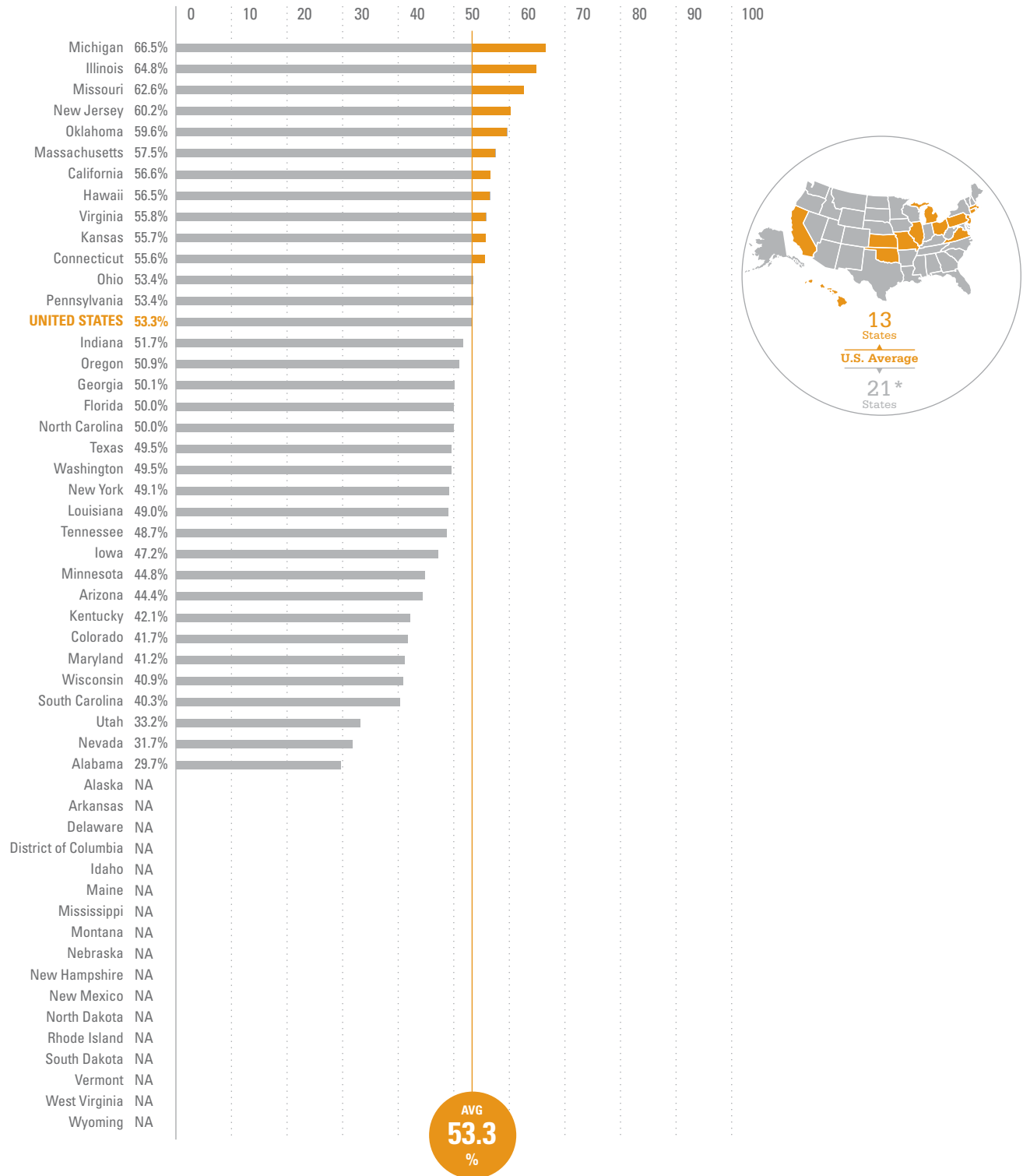
AVG
60.7
%

1.1f

Percentage of Asian 3- and 4-Year-Olds Enrolled in Preschool or Kindergarten Programs by State Rank, 2006–2008

New figure +

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006–2008 American Community Survey Three-Year Estimates



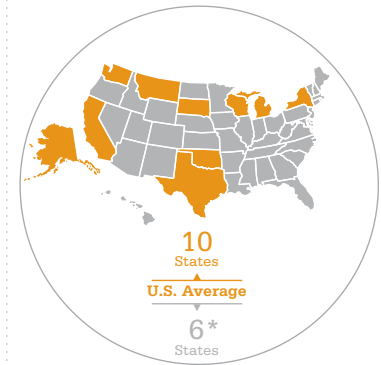
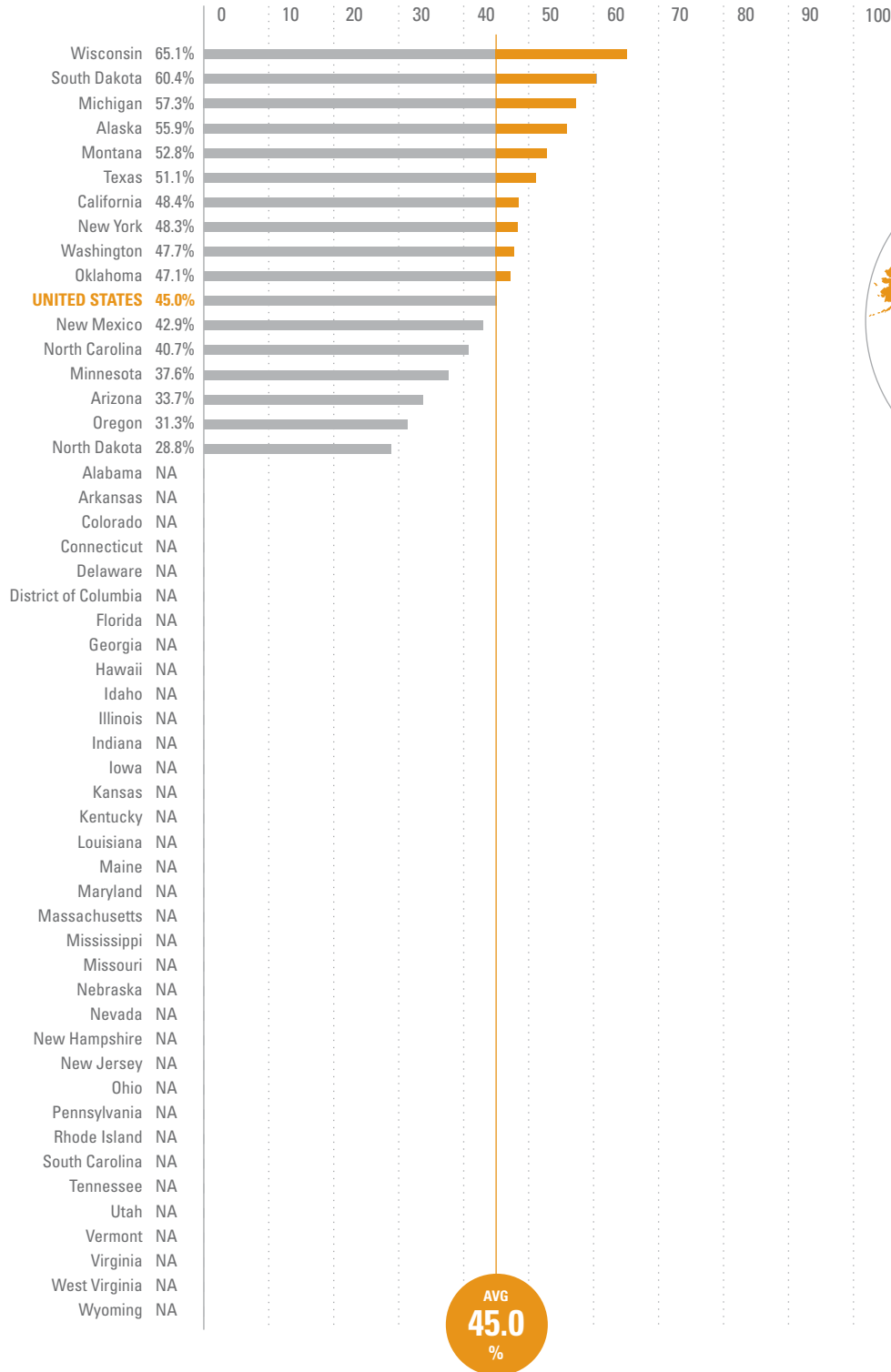
* Indicator data not available for all states.

1.1g

Percentage of American Indian or Alaska Native 3- and 4-Year-Olds Enrolled in Preschool or Kindergarten Programs by State Rank, 2006–2008

New figure +

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006–2008 American Community Survey Three-Year Estimates



AVG
45.0
%

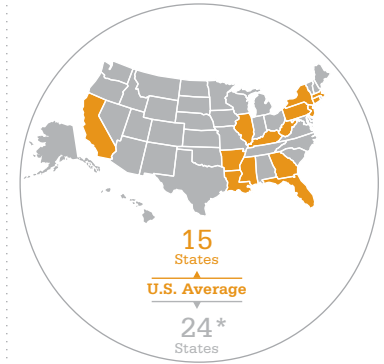
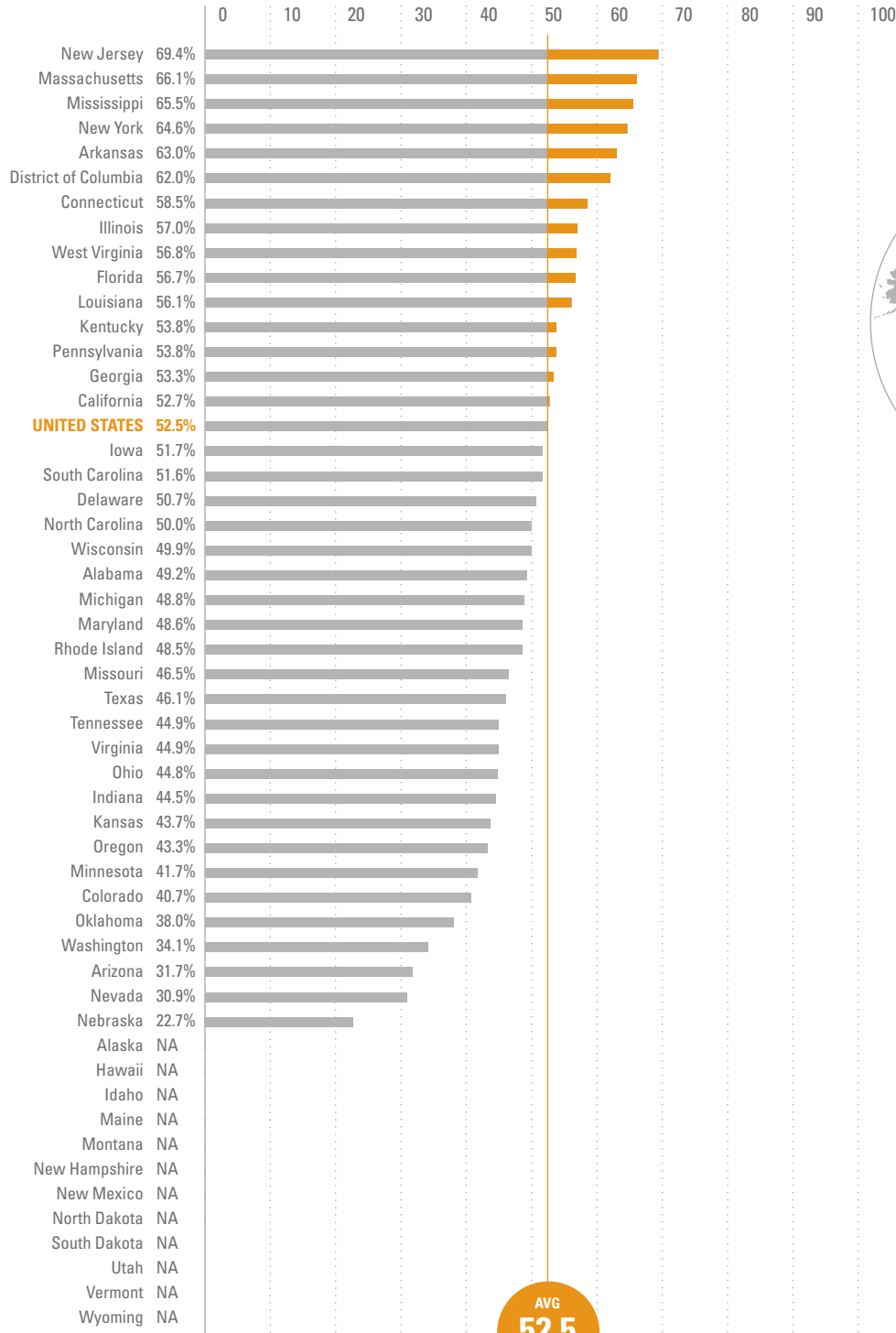
* Indicator data not available for all states.

1.1h

Percentage of Black 3- and 4-Year Olds Enrolled in Preschool or Kindergarten Programs by State Rank, 2006–2008

New figure +

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006–2008 American Community Survey Three-Year Estimates



AVG
52.5
%

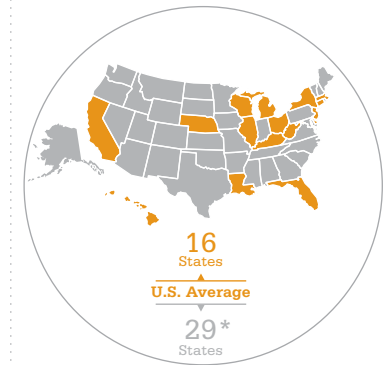
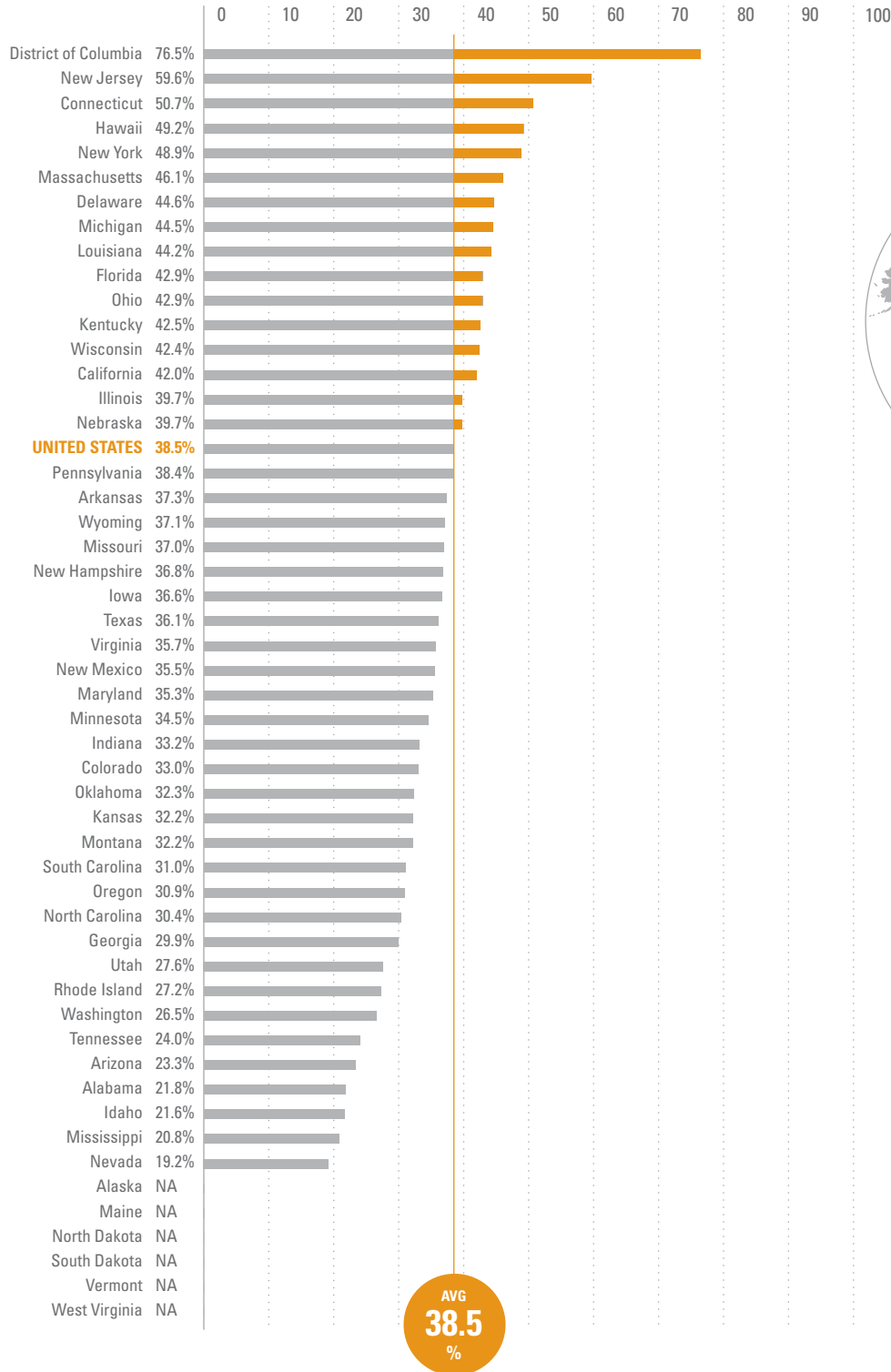
* Indicator data not available for all states.

1.1i

Percentage of Hispanic 3- and 4-Year-Olds Enrolled in Preschool or Kindergarten Programs by State Rank, 2006–2008

New figure +

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006–2008 American Community Survey Three-Year Estimates



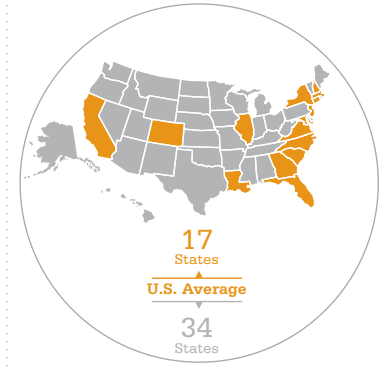
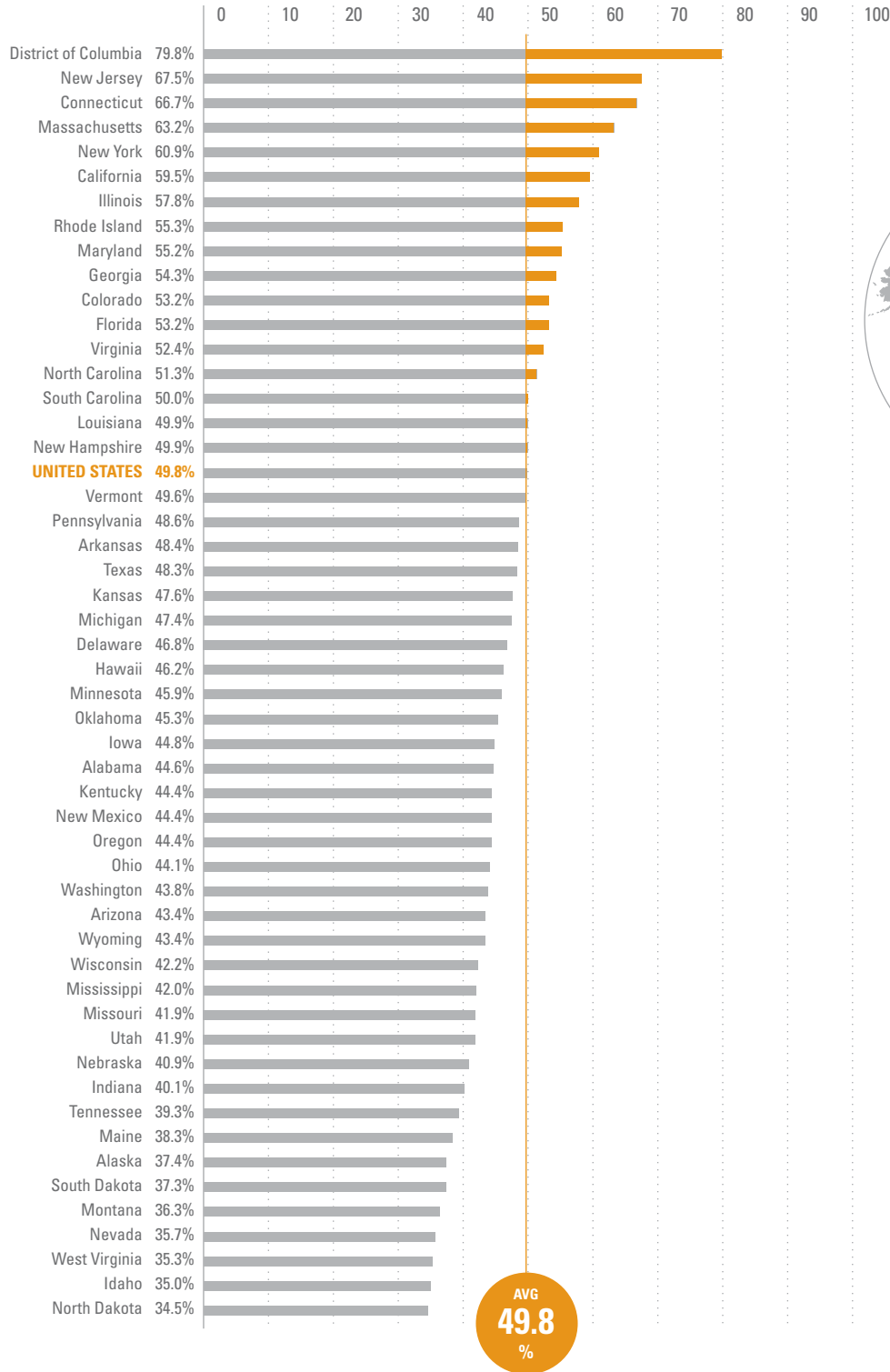
* Indicator data not available for all states.

1.1j

Percentage of White 3- and 4-Year-Olds Enrolled in Preschool or Kindergarten Programs by State Rank, 2006–2008

New figure +

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006–2008 American Community Survey Three-Year Estimates



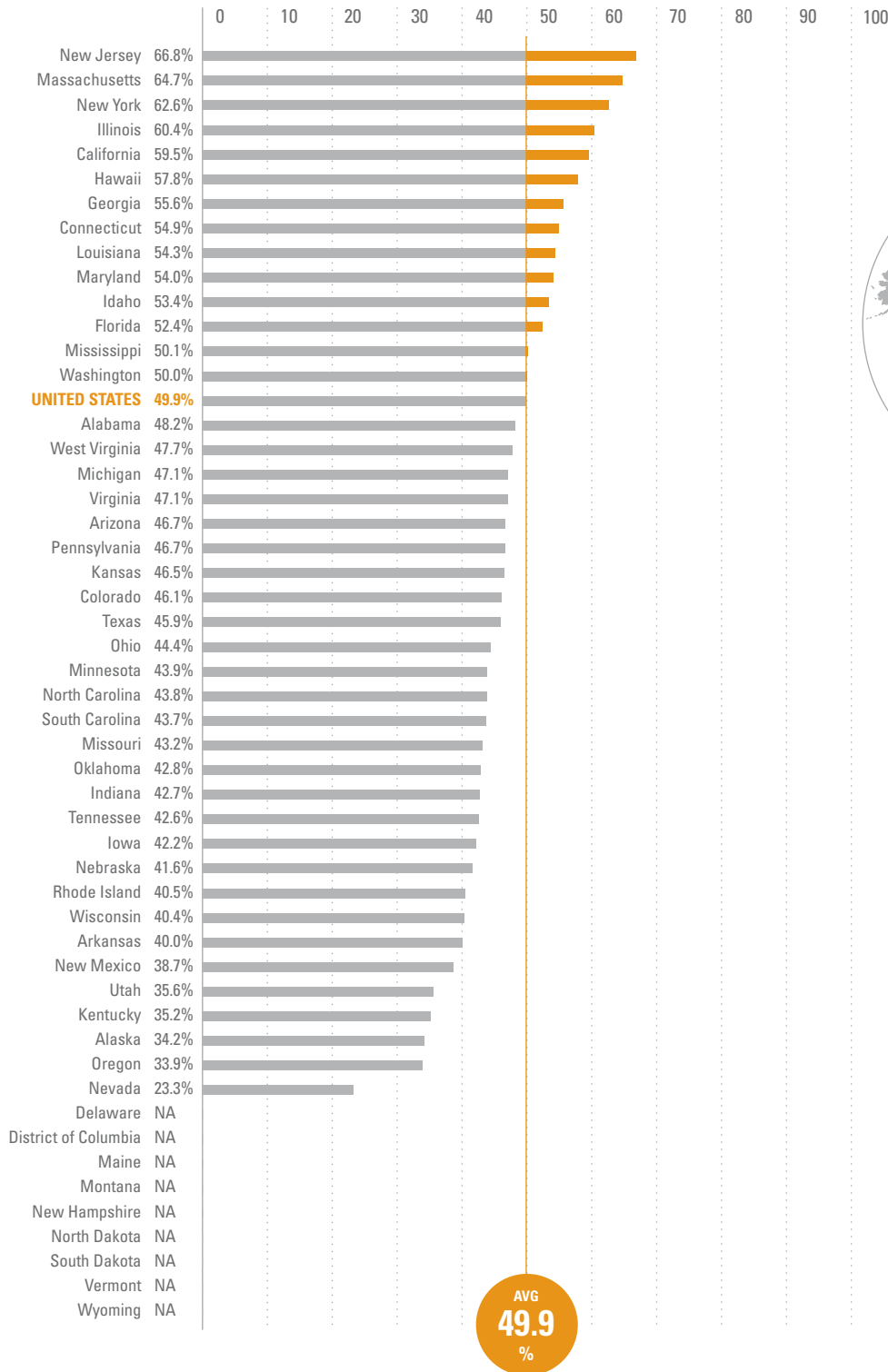
AVG
49.8
%

1.1k

Percentage of Two or More Races 3- and 4-Year-Olds Enrolled in Preschool or Kindergarten Programs by State Rank, 2006–2008

New figure +

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006–2008 American Community Survey Three-Year Estimates



* Indicator data not available for all states.

14.6%

As of 2009, 14.6 percent of 3- and 4-year-olds are in state-funded pre-K programs.

▲ **0.8ppts** 2008–2009

3.7%

As of 2009, 3.7 percent of 3-year-olds are in state-funded pre-K programs.

◀▶ 2008–2009

25.4%

As of 2009, 25.4 percent of 4-year-olds are in state-funded pre-K programs.

▲ **1.4ppts** 2008–2009

Percentage of 3- and 4-Year-Olds Enrolled in State-Funded Pre-K Programs

What is this measure, and why is this measure important? This indicator measures the percentage of 3- and 4-year-olds in state-funded preschool education programs. The measure presents an overview of data representing enrollment in state-funded child care for 3- and 4-year-olds at the state level. It is important because it represents the percentage of 3- and 4-year-olds who have access to state-funded pre-K programs.

What are the policy issues associated with this measure? The commission notes the importance of states developing funding formulas to assist communities in establishing high-quality preschool programs. Also, the commission recommends that local school boards and districts play a role in helping to establish preschool programs. Local school boards can do this by offering space for preschool programs to operate and by utilizing best practices for the alignment of a preschool curriculum with the learning expectations in kindergarten.

Where are we now? As of 2009, 14.6 percent of 3- and 4-year-olds are in state-funded pre-K programs (Figure 1.2a). Thirty-eight states reported the percentage of 3- and 4-year-olds in state-funded pre-K programs. Vermont has the highest percentage (35.4 percent) of 3- and 4-year-olds in state-funded pre-K programs. Nevada has the lowest percentage (1.4 percent).

Nearly 3.7 percent of 3-year-olds in the nation are in state-funded preschool education programs (Figure 1.2b). All of the 38 reporting states have less than 25.0 percent of 3-year-olds in state-funded preschool education, 16 of which are less than 1.0 percent. Illinois has the highest percentage (21.2 percent) of 3-year-olds in state-funded pre-K programs.

About 25.4 percent of 4-year-olds in the United States are in state-funded pre-K programs (Figure 1.2c). Oklahoma has the highest percentage (71.0 percent) of 4-year-olds in state-funded pre-K programs. Minnesota has the lowest percentage (1.6 percent).

When interpreting this measure, what should be kept in mind? The *State Preschool Yearbook* data provide information for each state on access, quality standards and resources for state-funded preschool programs.¹⁴ It is important to note that preschools are only one type of educational program that districts can target with Title I funds. The Title I funds are to support schools and districts with the highest percentage of low-income students, which can include all K–12 students. In addition, there are several states that do not offer state-funded pre-K programs: Alaska, Hawaii, Idaho, Indiana, Mississippi, Montana, New Hampshire, North Dakota, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Utah and Wyoming. Other states did not provide data about their enrollment disaggregated by age, including Massachusetts, Minnesota, Pennsylvania, Vermont and Wisconsin.

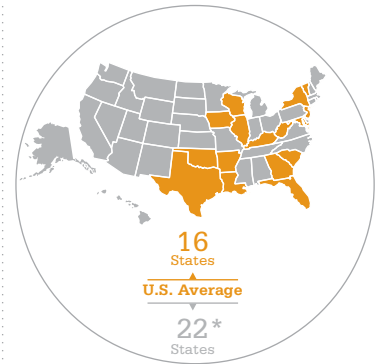
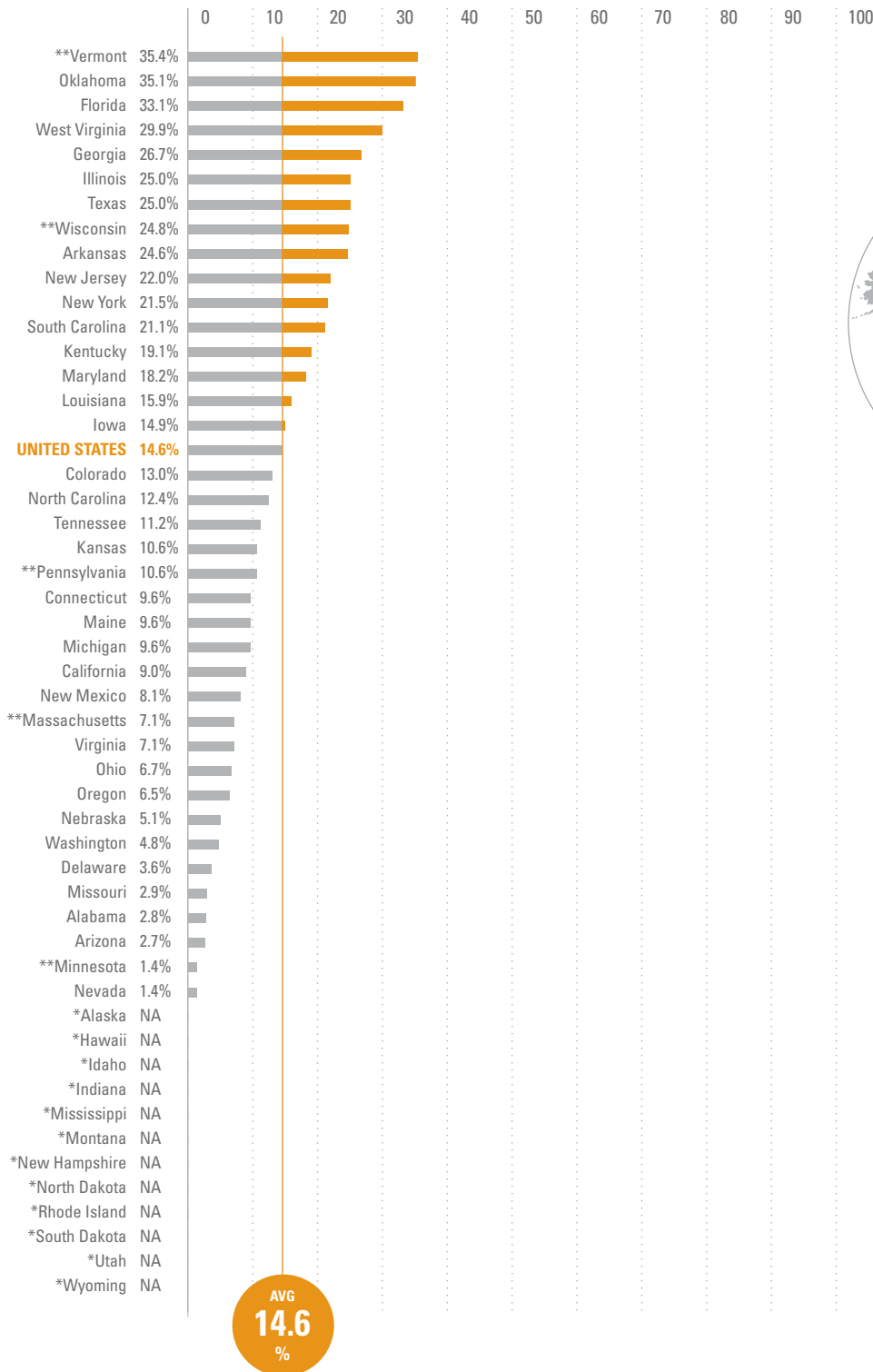
14. Barnett, W., Epstein, D., Carolan, M., Fitzgerald, J., Ackerman, D., and Friedman, A. "The State of Preschool 2010" (New Brunswick, NJ: NIEER, 2010).

1.2a

Percentage of 3- and 4-Year-Olds Enrolled in State-Funded Pre-K Programs by State Rank, 2009

New figure +

Source: National Institute for Early Education Research, Rutgers Graduate School of Education, The State of Preschool, 2009
 Note: The District of Columbia is not included.

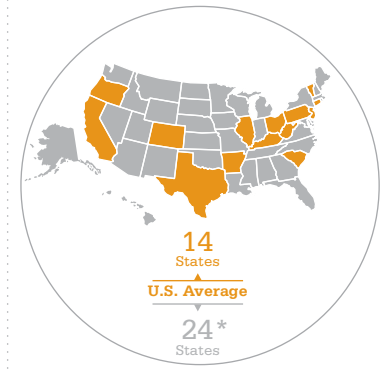
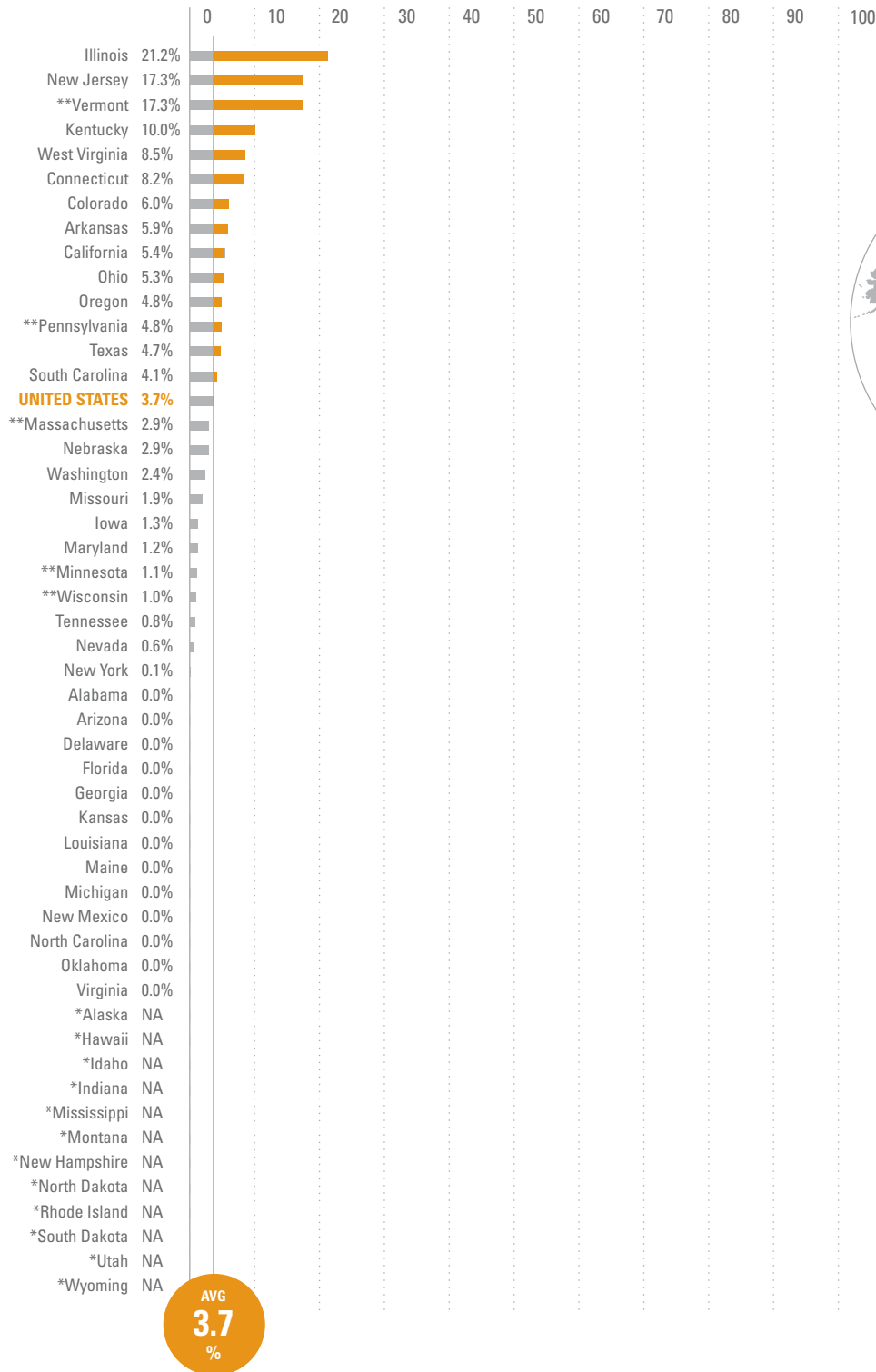


* No State Funded Program.
 ** At least one program in these states did not break down total enrollment figures into specific numbers of 3- and 4-year-olds served. As a result, the figures in this table are estimates.

1.2b

Percentage of 3-Year-Olds Enrolled in State-Funded Pre-K Programs by State Rank, 2009

Source: National Institute for Early Education Research, Rutgers Graduate School of Education, The State of Preschool, 2009
 Note: The District of Columbia is not included.



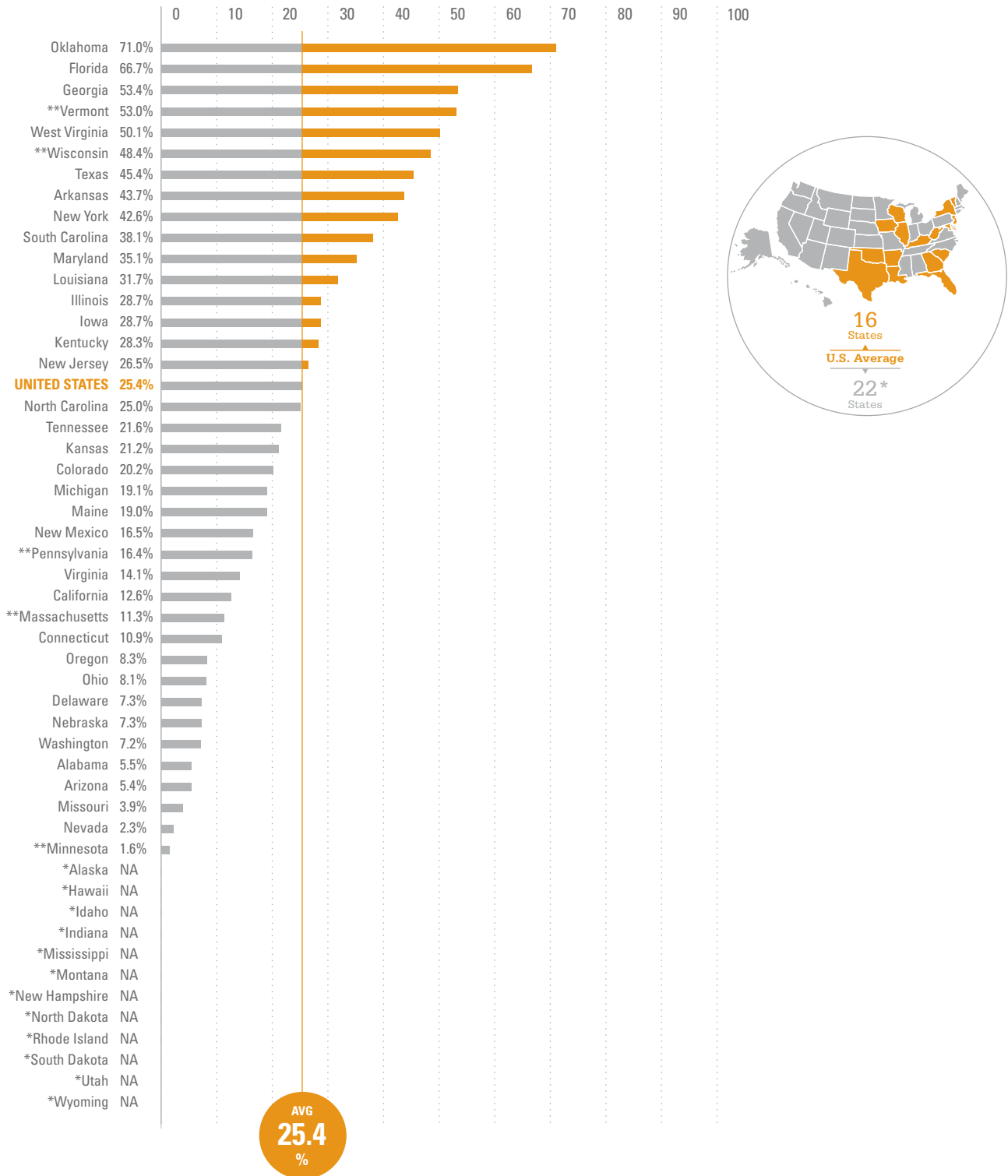
AVG
3.7
 %

* Indicator data not available for all states.
 ** At least one program in these states did not break down total enrollment figures into specific numbers of 3- and 4-year-olds served. As a result, the figures in this table are estimates.

1.2c

Percentage of 4-Year-Olds Enrolled in State-Funded Pre-K Programs by State Rank, 2009

Source: National Institute for Early Education Research, Rutgers Graduate School of Education, The State of Preschool, 2009
 Note: The District of Columbia is not included.



* Indicator data not available for all states.
 ** At least one program in these states did not break down total enrollment figures into specific numbers of 3- and 4-year-olds served. As a result, the figures in this table are estimates.

8.6%

As of 2009, 8.6 percent of 3- and 4-year-olds are in Head Start programs.

◀▶ 2008–2009

7.1%

As of 2009, 7.1 percent of 3-year-olds are in Head Start programs.

◀▶ 2008–2009

10.0%

As of 2009, 10.0 percent of 4-year-olds are in Head Start programs.

◀▶ 2008–2009

Percentage of 3- and 4-Year-Olds Enrolled in Head Start Programs

What is this measure, and why is this measure important? This measure shows the percentage of 3- and 4-year-olds in federally funded Head Start education programs. Head Start funding provides preschool education, medical care, dental care, nutrition services and mental health services to its participants.¹⁵ These multifaceted services aim to improve the overall quality of life and provide the skills necessary to succeed later in life.

What are the policy issues associated with this measure? Head Start is a federally funded program whose existence is based on yearly decisions made by the federal government. Each year the level of funding may change based on a variety of factors, including but not limited to the number of eligible children in a state, approval of the federal budget and supplemental state appropriations. For several years, the federal government has expressed concern about the use of funds for Head Start programs across the nation. With this possibility of variation in funding, states are increasing the amount of evidence they collect and disseminate about the use of Head Start funds in their state.

Where are we now? As of 2009, 8.6 percent of 3- and 4-year-olds in the United States are in Head Start programs (Figure 1.3a). Mississippi has the highest percentage (29.4 percent) of 3- and 4-year-olds in Head Start programs, and Nevada has the lowest percentage (2.4 percent).

Among 3-year-olds in the United States, 7.1 percent are in Head Start programs (Figure 1.3b). Mississippi has the highest percentage (23.9 percent) of 3-year-olds in Head Start programs. Nevada has the lowest percentage (1.4 percent).

The percentage of 4-year-olds in Head Start programs in the United States is 10.0 percent (Figure 1.3c). Mississippi has the highest percentage (34.9 percent) of 4-year-olds in Head Start programs. Nevada has the lowest percentage (3.3 percent).

15. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families. (January 2010). Head Start Impact Study. Final Report (Washington, DC), 9.

When interpreting this measure, what should be kept in mind?

Despite every state having access to federal funds for implementing a Head Start program, the methods and level of implementation may vary from state to state. Participating students may receive various types of instruction.¹⁶ All Head Start programs focus on helping children to learn, but many also focus on other aspects of childhood.

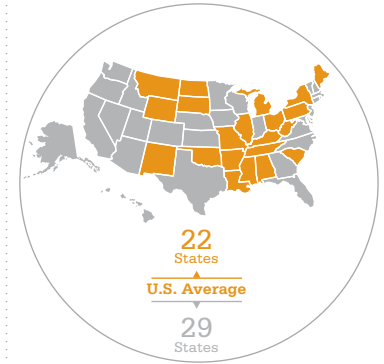
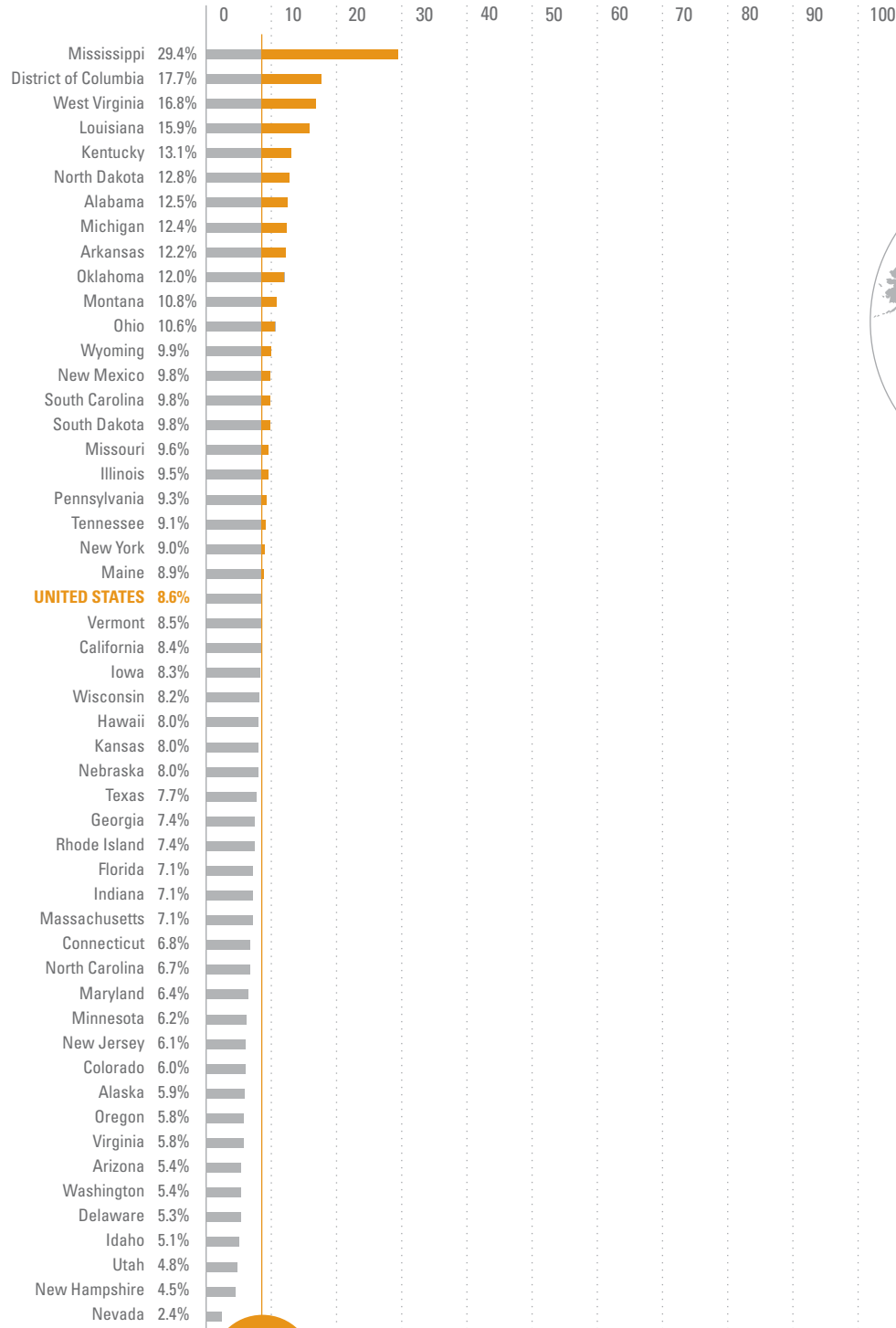
Data presented in this measure are from *The State of Preschool*, which are estimates based on data from the Head Start Program Information Reports for 2000–2010, and the Association for Children and Families. The data do not include children funded by state match; as such, the numbers for some states may underestimate the percentage of students who receive services from a Head Start program despite the source of funding.

16. Mathematica Policy Research. Results from the “I Am Moving, I Am Learning” Stage 1 Survey, 2007. Retrieved June 17, 2010, from http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/hs/eval_move_learn/reports/stage1_survey/stage1_survey.pdf

1.3a

Percentage of 3- and 4-Year-Olds Enrolled in Head Start Programs by State Rank, 2009

Source: National Institute for Early Education Research, Rutgers Graduate School of Education, The State of Preschool, 2009

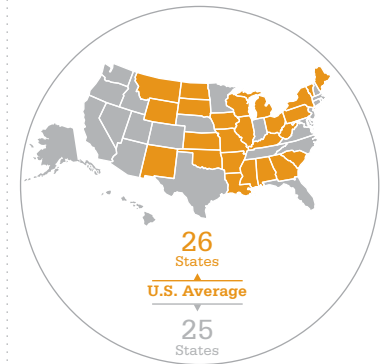
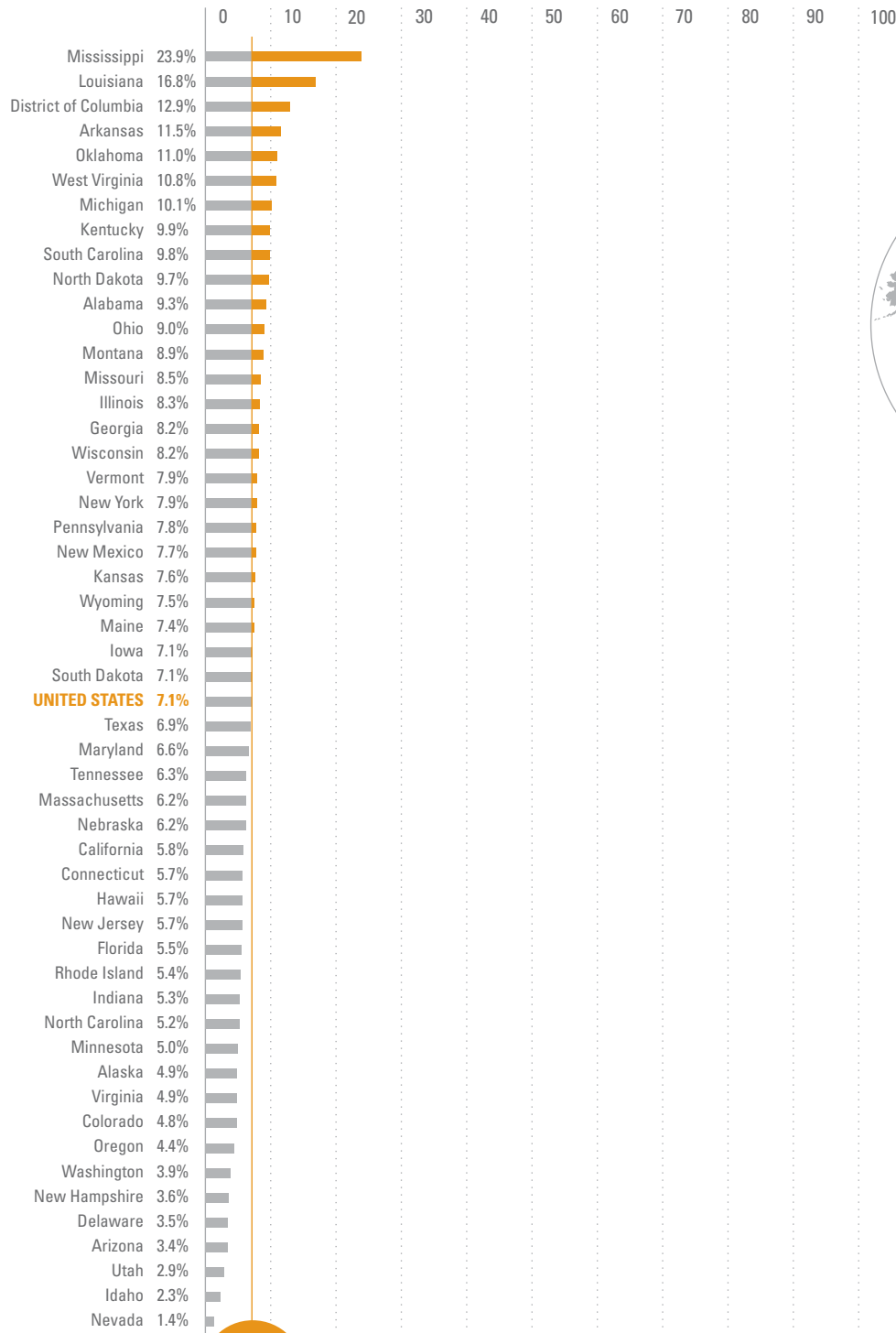


AVG
8.6
%

1.3b

Percentage of 3-Year-Olds Enrolled in Head Start Programs by State Rank, 2009

Source: National Institute for Early Education Research, Rutgers Graduate School of Education, The State of Preschool, 2009

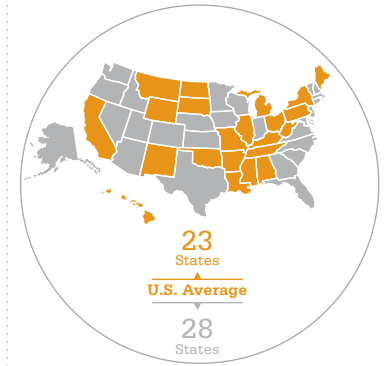
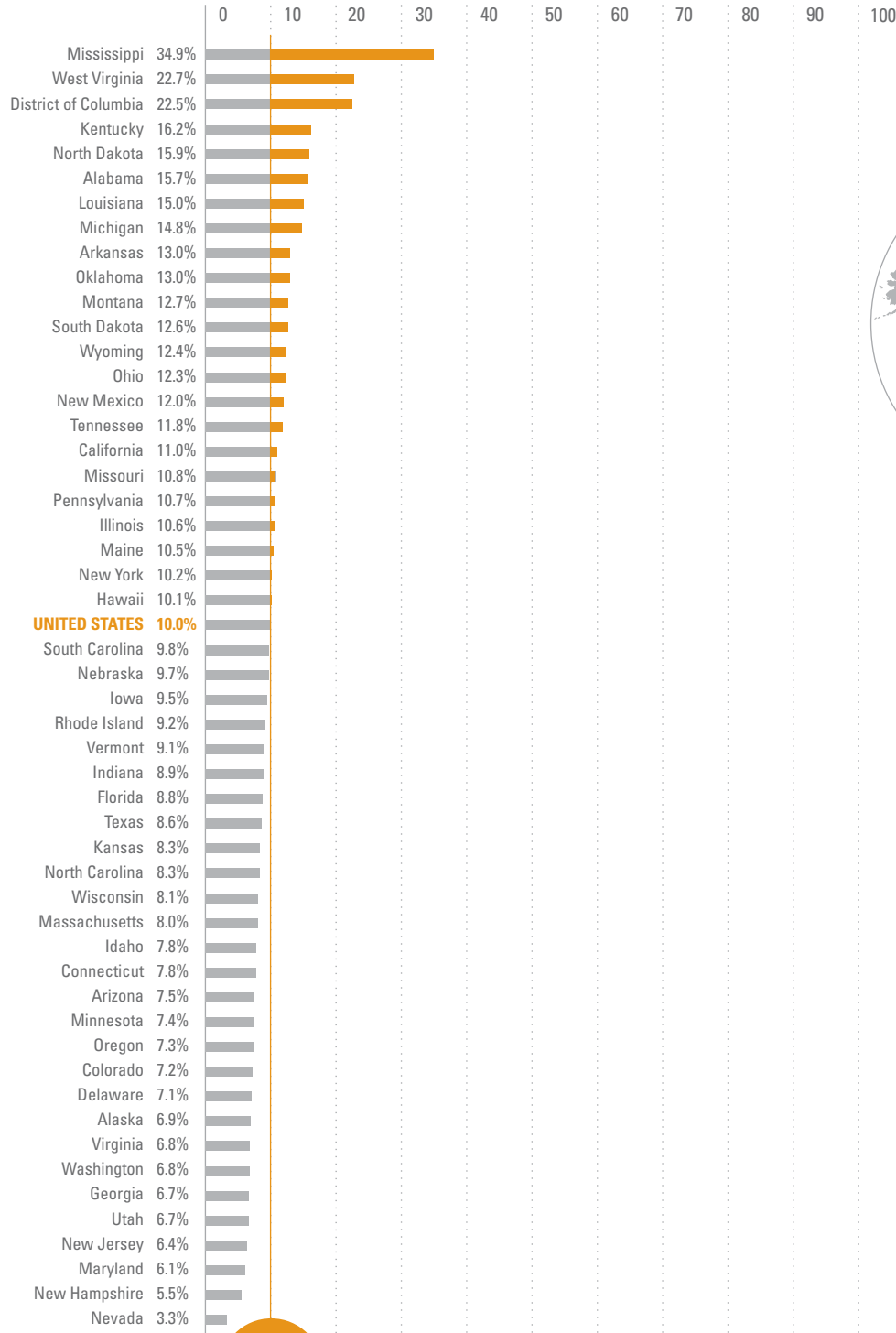


AVG
7.1
%

1.3c

Percentage of 4-Year-Olds Enrolled in Head Start Programs by State Rank, 2009

Source: National Institute for Early Education Research, Rutgers Graduate School of Education, The State of Preschool, 2009



AVG
10.0
%